
District-wide Assessment Guidance Policy: Administration and Reporting Requirements for Students with Disabilities



Special Education Programs
April 2007

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide districts with information regarding South Dakota's policy guidance for districts to meet the district-wide assessment requirements in the IDEA 2004.

This document has four parts:

1. Guidance from the federal Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) pertaining to changes and updates regarding district-wide assessment;
2. Guidance for school districts in implementing federal and state regulations regarding use of district-wide assessments for students with disabilities;
3. A self-assessment for school districts to determine what areas need improvement; and
4. A chart to document assessments administered to students as well as the corresponding alternate assessment for students who require an alternate assessment.

If you have any questions regarding district-wide assessment requirements, please contact Linda Turner at Linda.Turner@state.sd.us or at 605-773-6119.

****The following two page document is guidance published by OSEP based on the reauthorized IDEA 2004 and is the basis for South Dakota policy.**

IDEA–Reauthorized Statute STATEWIDE AND DISTRICT-WIDE ASSESSMENTS

(See also Individualized Education Program (IEP) Content)

The reauthorized *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) was signed into law on Dec. 3, 2004 by President George W. Bush. The provisions of the act became effective on July 1, 2005, with the exception of some of the elements pertaining to the definition of a “highly qualified teacher” that took effect upon the signing of the act. This is one in a series of documents prepared by the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) in the U.S. Department of Education, that covers a variety of high-interest topics and brings together the statutory language related to those topics to support constituents in preparing to implement the new requirements.¹ *This document addresses only the changes to the IDEA provisions regarding statewide and district-wide assessments that took effect on July 1, 2005. It does not address any changes that may be made by the final regulations.*

IDEA 2004:

1. Removes the IDEA reference to “modifications in administration” regarding the assessment of children’s academic achievement and functional performance.

An individualized education program (IEP) must include a statement of any “appropriate accommodations that are necessary to measure the academic achievement and functional performance of the child,” rather than a statement of individual modifications in the administration of state or district-wide student assessments. [612(d)(1)(A)(VI)(aa) of IDEA]

2. Adds a reference to *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB).

All children with disabilities are included in all general state and district-wide assessment programs, including assessments described under Section 1111 of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) of 1965,² with appropriate accommodations and alternate assessments where necessary and as indicated in their respective individualized education programs (IEPs). [612(a)(16)(A) of IDEA]

¹ Topics in this series include: Alignment With the *No Child Left Behind Act*; Changes in Initial Evaluation and Reevaluation; Children Enrolled by Their Parents in Private Schools; Discipline; Disproportionality and Overidentification; Early Intervening Services; Highly Qualified Teachers; Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team Meetings and Changes to the IEP; Individualized Education Program (IEP); Local Funding; National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard (NIMAS); Part C Amendments in *IDEA 2004*; Part C Option: Age 3 to Kindergarten Age; Procedural Safeguards: Surrogates, Notice and Consent; Procedural Safeguards: Mediation and Resolution Sessions; Procedural Safeguards: Due Process Hearings; Secondary Transition; State Funding; and Statewide and District-wide Assessments. Documents are available on the OSERS Web site at: www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/index.html.

² For purposes of this document, the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) is referred to as the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) of 1965, as amended.

3. Adds specific requirements for state guidelines regarding alternate assessments.

State (or, in the case of a district-wide assessment, the local education agency (LEA)) guidelines developed and implemented under Section 612(a)(16)(c)(i) of IDEA must provide for alternate assessments that:

- Are aligned with the state's challenging academic content standards and challenging student academic achievement standards; and
- If the state has adopted alternate academic achievement standards permitted under the regulations promulgated to carry out Section 1111(b)(1) of the ESEA, measure the achievement of children with disabilities against those standards.

The state conducts the alternate assessments described above. [612(a)(16)(C)(ii), (iii) of IDEA]

4. Expands requirements for reporting.

The state education agency (SEA) (or, in the case of a district-wide assessment, the LEA) makes available to the public and reports to the public with the same frequency and in the same detail as it reports on the assessment of nondisabled children, the following:

- The numbers of children with disabilities participating in regular assessments, and the number of those children who were provided accommodations in order to participate in those assessments;
- The number of children with disabilities participating in alternate assessments that are aligned with the state's challenging academic content standards and challenging student academic achievement standards; and the number of children with disabilities participating in alternate assessments aligned with alternate achievement standards; and
- The performance of children with disabilities on regular assessments and on alternate assessments (if the number of children with disabilities participating in those assessments is sufficient to yield statistically reliable information and reporting that information will not reveal personally identifiable information about an individual student), compared with the achievement of all children, including children with disabilities, on those assessments.

[612(a)(16)(D) of IDEA]

5. Includes changes to the individualized education program (IEP).

The IEP must include the following:

- For children with disabilities who take alternate assessments aligned to alternate achievement standards, a description of benchmarks or short-term objectives (within the required statement of a child's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance);
- A statement of any individual appropriate accommodations that are necessary to measure the academic achievement and functional performance of the child on state and district-wide assessments consistent with Section 612(a)(16)(A) of IDEA; and
- If the IEP team determines that the child shall take an alternate assessment on a particular state or district-wide assessment of student achievement, a statement of why the child cannot participate in the regular assessment, and the particular alternate assessment selected is appropriate for the child.

[614(d)(1)(A)(i)(I)(cc), (VI)(aa)-(bb) of IDEA]

****End OSEP guidance.**

South Dakota District-wide Assessment Guidance

What is a district-wide assessment?

A district-wide assessment is one that is administered to an entire grade(s) at a district level to measure the achievement of students. Screenings which are administered for making placement decisions are not considered district-wide assessments, unless results are publicly reported. district-wide assessments furnish rich, compelling evidence about the achievement of district goals. Districts may select large-scale assessments (such as Stanford 10, Iowa Test of Basic Skills, or the California Achievement Test) that align with district goals, reflect classroom practice and provide evidence of student learning. district-wide assessment data is often used to gain formative information on student progress, help districts determine areas for school improvement, provide feedback to teachers and parents and report academic progress to the community. All students must participate in the district-wide assessment to gauge the effectiveness of the education system.

Districts which administer district-wide assessments must:

- Include all children with disabilities in all district-wide assessments;
- Determine allowable accommodations for district assessments and establish guidelines for the use of accommodations;
- Have available an appropriate alternate assessment for students whose IEPs indicate alternate assessment for state and district-wide assessment;
- To the extent feasible, use universal design principles in developing and administering any assessments; and
- If district-wide assessment results are reported publicly, districts must report results for students with disabilities (on both the district assessment and district alternate) with the same frequency and detail as students who do not have disabilities.

Determining accommodations for district-wide assessment:

Accommodations on large-scale assessments are typically very codified and structured. Test publishers should have available information regarding accommodations that are allowed for administration.

Alternate assessment for district-wide assessments:

If a school district has a district-wide assessment, then that district must also have a district alternate assessment for those students who cannot participate in the regular assessment even with accommodations and whose IEP indicates participation in the alternate assessment. Students in South Dakota must meet the significant cognitive disability criteria and have alternate assessment indicated on the students IEP to be eligible to participate in alternate assessments. If the student's IEP team determines an alternate assessment is necessary, the IEP must include a statement of why the child cannot participate in the regular assessment and why the particular alternate assessment selected is appropriate for the child. The student's IEP must also have a description of benchmarks or short-term objectives. The alternate assessment must

assess the same content areas as the regular district-wide assessment. South Dakota has developed the Dakota STEP-A for students in grades K-11. If appropriate, districts may use the STEP-A at grades K-2 and 9 & 10 as a district-wide alternate assessment for reading and math. The STEP-A at grades 3-8 & 11 is reserved for statewide assessment, therefore districts would have to find another alternate assessment if providing district-wide assessments at those grade levels.

Options for alternate assessment could consist of a body of evidence or a performance based assessment. These assessments should be used to measure student progress in the district's academic curriculum. If the district assessment covers several different content areas (reading, writing, math, science, etc.) then the district alternate assessment must also measure progress in those content areas and should be linked to grade level expectations.

Body of Evidence:

In terms of a district alternate assessment, a body of evidence is a collection of information about a student's progress in the general academic curriculum. A body of evidence incorporates data from multiple sources and assessment methods. Many sources of information for a body of evidence assessment are already administered, developed or gathered on an ongoing basis.

In general, the strength of the body of evidence assessment is that it allows a great deal of flexibility for teachers and students in finding evidence of academic skills and may allow for a more valid assessment of what a student knows and can do. However, the body of evidence approach may have more threats to reliability as it is difficult for the assessment to be administered and scored in the same way across several students.

Both the information collected and the scoring rubric for the body of evidence assessment should be closely aligned with the district's academic content standards. The body of evidence assessment should use a variety of clearly defined and acceptable materials to document student knowledge. It should be scored using a carefully designed rubric accompanied by extensive scoring training.

Performance Based Assessment:

A performance based assessment is a point-in-time, direct measure of a student's knowledge and skills. This assessment typically measures how independently the student can perform an activity linked to an academic standard or to general education curriculum content. A strength of the performance based assessment is that it in many ways mirrors components of a general assessment. For example, it uses a set and ordered questions for each student and yields quantitative data that can be analyzed in much the same way as the general assessment.

Making performance based assessments valid for this population of students can be a challenge. Threats to validity result in part from the specific content of the assessment being more prescribed. That is, the assessment defines how a student can demonstrate reading or math, etc. in a more standardized way. Typically this would be an advantage in an assessment system but for this population of students it may limit how they can demonstrate what they know. In addition, the demonstration of the academic knowledge or skill is at one point in time, instead of across a longer period.

To address threats to validity, the content of the assessment must be closely aligned with academic standards. Significant accommodations and modifications should be allowed because of the variety of challenges this population of students presents in accessing and responding to assessments. For example, the assessment should allow for the extensive use of assistive technology devices, flexibility in testing session length and scheduling and changes to the materials presented to students so they may better understand, manipulate, and respond to questions and activities. Reliability on the performance based assessment is typically strong if those administering the assessment are trained to give the same questions to all students and there is clear guidance provided on scoring the levels of independence in performing each task.

Questions districts should consider when selecting a district alternate assessment:

1. What is the purpose of the district's large-scale assessment?
2. To what extent has the district aligned assessment with standards and district curriculum?
3. To what extent does the district have a system to collect and analyze district-wide assessment data?
4. If results are reported for district-wide assessment, how will the results of the alternate assessment be reported?
5. Will your system provide meaningful information to parents and teachers? Assessment system or reporting system?

District-wide reporting requirements:

For district-wide assessments used to measure academic achievement, if the district makes available to the public, and reports to the public assessment results, the district must ensure they report with the same frequency and in the same detail for students with disabilities as it reports on the assessment of nondisabled children, the following:

1. The number of children with disabilities participating in regular assessments, and the number of those children who were provided accommodations in order to participate in those assessments;
2. The number of children with disabilities participating in alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards; and
3. The performance of children with disabilities on regular assessments and on alternate assessments, compared with the achievement of all children, including children with disabilities, on those assessments.

Please note that the number of students is only required to be reported if the number of children with disabilities participating in those district-wide assessment is sufficient to yield statistically reliable information and reporting that information will not reveal personally identifiable information about an individual student. For reporting purposes, South Dakota uses an *n* size of ten.

District Self Assessment

Question	YES	NO
1. Does your district use district level assessments?		
1a: Do you have written documentation indicating which grades and content areas the district uses a district assessment?		
2. Does the district include all students in district-wide assessment, including all students with disabilities?		
3. Has the district identified allowable accommodations and guidelines for the use of accommodations on the district-wide assessments?		
4. Does the district have available an alternate assessment for every grade and content area for which a district-wide assessment is administered?		
5. Have you considered how universal design principles are incorporated in your district's assessments?		
6. Does your district publicly report results on district-wide assessments with the same frequency and in the same detail for students with disabilities as it reports on the assessment of nondisabled children?		
6 a: Are you reporting the number of children with disabilities participating in regular assessments, and the number of those children who were provided accommodations in order to participate in those assessments?		
6 b: Are you reporting the number of children with disabilities participating in alternate assessments based on alternate achievement descriptors?		
6 c: Are you reporting the performance of children with disabilities on regular assessments and on alternate assessments, compared with the achievement of all children, including children with disabilities, on those assessments?		

District-wide Assessments Administered

[illegible]